




Quad  
2000



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# Quad 2000

the literary arts magazine of  
Birmingham-Southern College



*wood and metal construction no. 1*

John Stewart Jackson

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# Fog

That sound,  
there!  
On the other side of dawn.  
Muffled and heavy  
(a shade of gray not yet gray)  
seeps towards me;

Through translucence almost tangible  
its tongue  
lashes out:  
searches for someone  
or something  
to tell  
that morning is here.

-Allen Middlebrooks

## Simple Pleasures

*by Lacy Harrell*

*He* didn't know her name, but he liked it that way. That way he just got what he wanted without worrying about what she thought. He hated the talkers: the ones who mindlessly chattered, only hoping to get a good tip. He hated that. He just wanted to take care of business and then be on his way.

It had been awhile since he had had one. Money had been tight, so he was forced to do it to himself. He did it in front of the mirror, but that just made him more nervous so he decided just to go without one for awhile. But when people at the office began to notice, he knew he'd have to splurge.

He tried to find an appointment with some of the ladies uptown, but they were overpriced and booked for the next two weeks. Downtown they were a bit cheaper, but they were known for cutting it too short. He found some men with appointments available, but he didn't think he was ready for that. He only trusted women.

He waited in a chair a bit anxious. He didn't know what he wanted. He certainly was no expert, but it wasn't anything new. She started to walk towards him. She was pretty, not too wild. Perfect for his fairly boring personality. "Hello, Mr. Brown," she said in a throaty voice.

He had given his name when he booked the appointment. He noticed her nails that were painted pepto pink with diamond studs on the tips. She looked at him carefully, ran her fingers through his hair, and then lightly scratched his neck.

"So Mr. Brown," the nameless beauty said, "how much hair are we going to cut off today?"





*Honey Cone* John L. Hassell, Jr.



*Bittersweet* John Janecky



## If These Bridges Could Walk

One night—late, and looking for shortcuts.  
I cross a bridge...

Gathered outside a church on the corner,  
Young black men, radiant in religion  
Yield signs.

Bright Crayola bold on stiff cardboard  
Dances at passersby,  
And the two-man band of drum and horn plays on.

On the other corner of the highway  
The man's cardboard sign reads,  
"Hungry. Will work for food. God bless."

The span of a bridge and I'm paused.  
This space creating mental friction so I would have laughed  
Had I missed the disconnection.

In a city full of guilty monuments  
To transgressions past and historic,  
I See These Bridges.

Do the faithful rush-hour prophets find sign-waving  
Safer than action? Does the man who loiters curbside  
See another mile before he sleeps?

I see concrete, asphalt, steel and tar.  
Eight car lengths down a one way trip.  
To what?

Now I know salvation lies  
Across the highway bridge.

-Emily Self

## Risk

In the right shoulder's grass  
My headlights catch  
A pair of toddling reflectors  
The size of nickels:  
An opossum.  
Pondering the far side.

There.  
Trees will seem unfamiliar.  
Stumps fresher.  
The soil yields  
Different smells.  
New and plentiful  
Insects hide in  
Newer blackness.

Should I pull over,  
Offer advice?

I've seen highways flanked  
More by dead opossums  
Than mile markers.

But, I've seen people  
With tilted spines  
And eyes soiled red,  
Their blood gnawed thin  
By regret.  
If I stop—

Join it  
In the dry grass  
To gaze at  
Foreign shadows,  
Watching halogen  
Gash the darkness  
And retreat—

I just won't know what  
To tell it.

-Jerry Hinnen

## Who's the Fairest of Them All?

I hate you because when you laugh it sounds like a shotgun.  
Because you feel worthless if you don't make straight A's.  
Because you gave into Alan to make things easy and you didn't even know his last name.  
Because you equated sex with love for too many years.  
Because you're too scared to sing in public even though you got a standing ovation last time you did.  
Because you refuse to fly.  
Because you have \$1159.41 on your Discover card bill  
Because you were prescribed sleep medication at 8 to stop the nightmares.  
Because you didn't study hard enough for the Jefferson County Spelling Bee in sixth grade (L-A-P-I-D-A-R-Y).

I hate you because your favorite Pearl Jam song is "Black."  
Because you use Stephen to pacify your ego.  
Because you flirt with professors to ensure your A's.  
Because it works.  
Because you let your sister's hatred determine your self-worth.  
Because you fall in love with Baptist ministers who could never forgive you.  
Because you haven't accepted the fact that God loves you unconditionally.  
Because you allowed Alex to hit you.

I hate you because you hate shaving your legs but do it anyway.  
Because you believe your parents love you even though you know they don't like you.  
Because you blamed John's impotence on your lack of sexiness instead of his lack of heterosexuality.  
Because you've never read Huckleberry Finn yet claim to be an English major.  
Because you take too many pills.  
Because you live in fear that your friends will decide you're a bitch and quit liking you.  
Because you flipped off the girl in the green car this morning.  
Because your dad blames you for the fact that he's a fifty-year-old nothing.

I hate you because you've seen too much porn.  
Because you don't know how to shut up.  
Because you were in New Orleans when Pam's dad died.  
Because you once went to six fraternity parties in one night.  
Because you let Brian think you'll sleep with him.  
Because you have been indelicate with your body, decorating it with scars.

But mostly, I hate you because you can't admit when something's wrong.  
Because you have perfected the art of "I'm fine."  
Because you eat your hurts and vomit lies.  
Because you plan everyone's birthday party including your own.  
Because you soak in your self-pity, pouring it into poems.  
Which in the end won't make a damn difference.

-Kelly Alane Bearden



*The Peak* Christina Argo and Leslie Caldwell

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*Seven Venus* James McGriff



## First Time

The artist's nude poses,  
augments her profuse  
breasts, hips  
by the angle of her posture.  
I pose,  
push my B-cup  
into proportion with  
my angular roundness—  
the disjointed rolls,  
tubs of a Leger  
painting.

My first time,  
I mimic scenes,  
rehearsed lines; images  
conjure—I mold my body  
to fit, Pygmalion and Galatea  
at once.

You watch  
me watch you.  
My first time  
to stand,  
to wait.  
I watch  
you watch me.  
You remain at a distance.

Close your eyes—  
dispel my fear;  
let me close mine,  
forget the torrent  
of thoughts, of guilt,  
to see you, nothing—  
anything but myself.

Rape me;  
as I shriek my  
consent; injure my body,  
until my thighs bruise purple, yellow—  
diseased, insipid pansies.  
Undulate, match the surges  
of thought-remnants  
of myself—until they break, disseminate.

My first time  
to stand,  
to wait to please—  
my last time.

-Mary Lou Butts

## canvas

there was a piece of cloth on the floor,  
off-white with splotches of color,  
    runs from masterpieces,  
    stains from wine  
greens and reds and blues all together,  
a single reminder of a canvas in my mind,  
the painting I cannot hang anywhere.

the music I make with words  
does not compare to the beautiful contrast  
of your paint on gesso,  
the colors all showing forms  
unlike these words that jumble  
and make no sense,  
I can see my soul in your picture.

-Darren Griffin

## Metamorphosis

When you were little  
did you ever see caterpillars?  
They would crawl around your patio steps,  
searching blind for something  
they didn't even know they were looking for,  
and you would lie on your stomach  
watching with five-year-old eyes.

The thin yellow stripes  
on their sleek black bodies  
curved with every tiny step they took,  
so much smaller  
than your first journeys down the driveway.

Fascinated, you watched them  
wrap themselves  
with a thousand white silks,  
strange comfort in tight closeness,  
like the embrace of a surrogate mother.

And when newborn butterflies dried  
nectar-glossy afterbirth  
off powder wings,  
you wondered with trembling lips  
where creeping caterpillars had gone,  
your fingers muddy from an early morning search  
for thin black bodies  
under the patio steps.

How happy you must have been  
when the sunset petals of butterfly wings  
finally wafted away,  
leaving glow-dust footprints  
on the warped wooden rail.

-McCharen Pratt

## Early March Observations

Maddening  
what might be overlooked  
on a between-seasons Sunday afternoon.

the uneven breaths you unknowingly take,  
the stare I send peripherally,  
the telepathic message I attempt to plant;  
straining synapses without breaking a sweat.

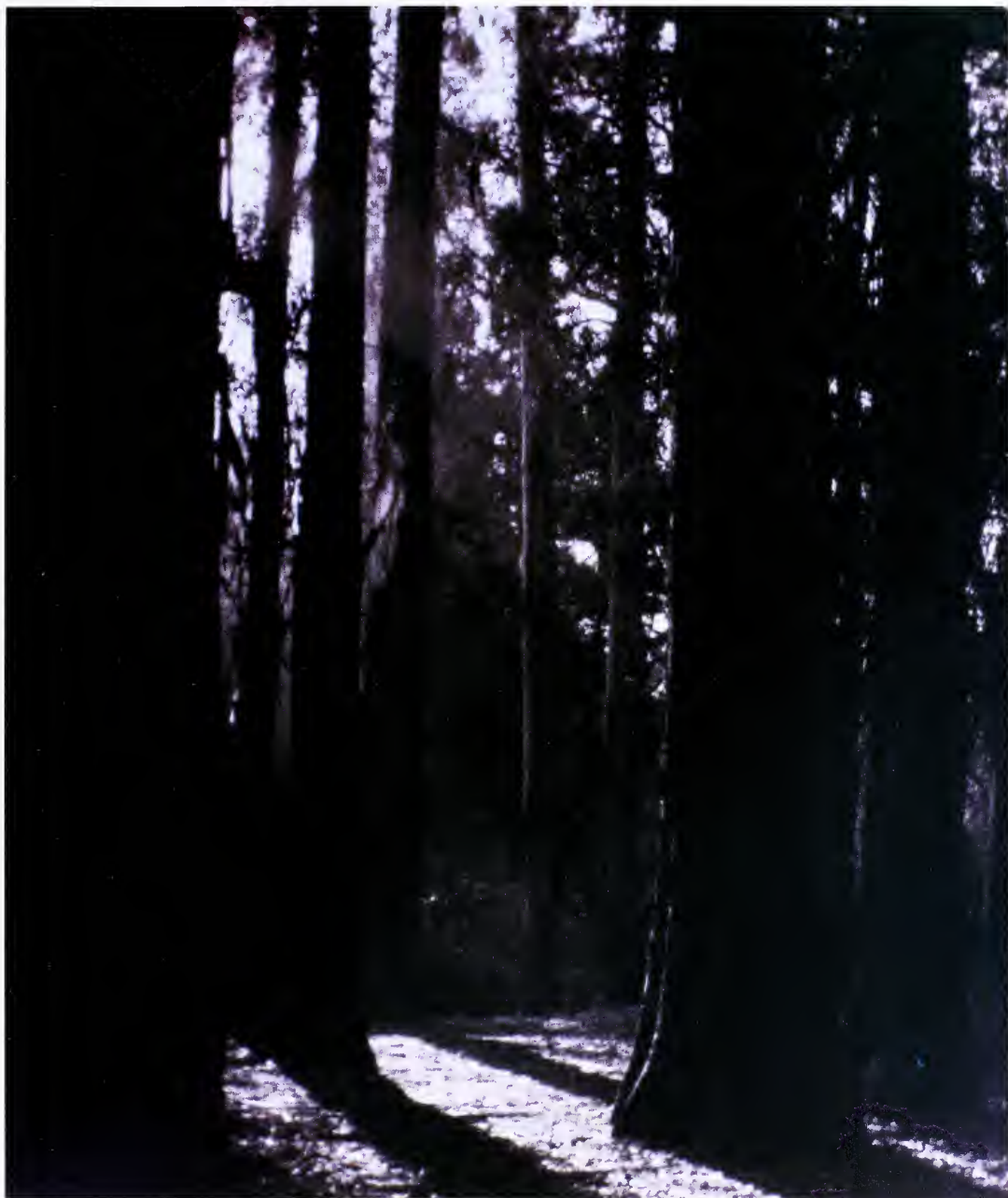
We let the sun hide.  
the sidewalk ramble,  
and flagging mailboxes hail us  
as we pass  
deadbolts and fences,  
windows and welcome mats.

Pleasing  
what is noticed  
on a between-seasons Sunday afternoon,

the lazy scrape of your soles on the concrete.  
the unintentional brushing of elbows;  
humming a nameless song from nowhere  
while juggling circular ideas in silence.

We let thoughts dangle,  
minutes spend,  
untainted by tongues  
and vocal cords  
and waves and air and ears:  
we let everything unsaid  
remain.

-Liz Godwin



*Untitled*      Cauty Worley

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*If pretension had a face...* Catherine Roden



# Excerpt from “The Last Drag”

by Liz Godwin

When we reach the Hole, Dad and Michael gather up the net that rests in casual heaps at the back of the boat. It is made of thick green rope and must be at least twenty to thirty feet, maybe longer. The net’s knotted, diamond-shaped holes are big enough to let little things like minnows and coquina shells pass through but small enough to hold in the things we’d like to keep. The net is shaped like a sock – the open end is nearest the boat. Dad is careful to make sure the far end of the net (the end where the toes would go) is tied tightly closed. He will untie this end to release the catch after every haul. There are two heavy square boards connected to the end of the net closest to the boat that are placed into the water last. They stand vertically and hold the net wide as well as weigh it down, because we want it to drag along the lagoon floor where all the shrimp walk around.

There are bright foam rings and cones tied to the net that float and bob on the water’s surface, warning passing boats not to cross. A shrimp net tangled up in a motor is a bad, bad scene. I steer our boat now. Though we are barely moving, my stomach tightens in reaction to the responsibility. I have been pointing the bow towards the water tower in the distance (I always ask Dad for a landmark to guide me) but for some reason I sense that I am wavering, curving out of control. Show-off skiers send uneasy waves to rock our boat. Thanks, girl, I’ve got it now, Dad says, and I return thankfully to the stress-free task of counting the condominiums in the distance.

The first drag seems the longest because all you can do is wait. During the following drags you sift through the previous catch, which keeps you busy. But the first drag seems to drag and drag and drag and the world sounds so quiet and feels so slow. There is no need for Dad to say aloud, “Be patient,” because we see enough patience in his own face to bring us down calmly from our most hyper fidgets. I think about how Dad’s mouth is always turned slightly upward in a perpetual smile, while my lips do the opposite, creating a look of constant frowning, which is peculiar and deceiving since I am usually content inside. I wonder if Dad is ecstatic, or if the smile is as deceiving as my scowl. I decide that he must be ecstatic – his eyes reveal more than the smile. And I am convinced that he always hears a song in his head. He simply contains himself the best way he can.

The salt-saturated air has caused my hair to separate into crunchy mopstrings. Mary’s lips, which are naturally a bright red color, are now flaky paper, broken. It seems the fierce July sun has summoned at least eight new freckles to Michael’s back, which he scratches every few minutes. All three of us have a habit of squinting so hard that our faces look ridiculously contorted, but I don’t like the way the sunglasses tickle my nose and leave puddles of sweat under my eyes.

Ohhhhh-kayyyy, says Dad. He puts the motor in neutral. We snap out of our dazes. Mary leaps. I leap. Michael and Dad are already hauling in the net, a task that to me looks backbreaking. It will take a while to pull the catch into the boat, but Mary and I are holding the tongs we’ll use to sort through the creatures, eagerly clapping them open and closed like chomping jaws. We know to stay out of the way, so we perch as high as we can on the chairs to catch the first glimpse of the catch. With one great heave Dad and Michael raise the end of the net out of the brown bubbles. They send it crashing down into the huge tin tub, then lunge over to untie it. Soon the tub contains a mass of slithering, flopping, scuttling, sputtering sea life. I squint at the mass for a minute and it becomes one big breathing creature, struggling to survive out of saltwater. Instead we have at our mercy a multitude of small things, individuals. It makes me crazy to decide what to save first.

Hermit crabs can survive the longest out of water, which is unfortunate for the other creatures since we so enjoy the sound the hermits make when they sink. Plooop, and then the air bubbles inside their shells escape and rise to the surface. If there happens to be an eel slinking around in the tub, we like to get him out of sight as soon as possible, for obvious reasons. Git ‘im, git ‘im, Mary squeaks, and three pairs of tongs go violently chomping after the same dark snaky tail. Michael is victorious. He uses both hands to raise the eel up high and makes a big production of slinging it through the air and back into the Little Lagoon. I always wonder if we catch the same animals over and over again. It is possible, and I wonder if these kinds of animals have memories of nets and tongs and people peering down at them. I wonder if they enjoy sailing through the air for a second.

## Sonnet of the Apes

I'm jealous of my ancestor, the baboon  
Who can proclaim his alarm, fury, or lust  
In scarlet-and-azure flashes; just his butt  
Is voice enough. Consider, if I moon  
Someone, the color and message. So damned pale.  
When proboscis monkeys' noses flare red and swell,  
They say what we take novels up to tell.  
Wish we'd kept that (and, 'course, the prehensile tail).

So screw us teaching Koko how to sign—  
We should be asking gibbons or macaques  
To tutor us. We'd hear in one flexed stretch  
Of limbs or lips, a sermon; we could find  
Our poems in the scowl of silverbacks.  
Our songs sung in the chitter of marmosets.

-Jerry Hinnen

## Daughter's Song

Spring grass is sweeter when in Mama's arms I lie,  
wrapping myself in her familiar contralto,  
the earth itself humming our lullaby.

The humid breeze is a brown sugar sigh  
whose whisper melts away winter's frozen groans.  
Spring grass is sweeter when in Mama's arms I lie

and she rocks me to the rhythm of summer drifting by.  
I drink up the sun and feel it pulsing in my bones,  
the earth itself humming our lullaby.

Grandma sang too, her hymns lilting and wise,  
but she left with the winter, her gray soprano gone.  
Spring grass is sweeter when in Mama's arms I lie

and let her soft song touch my cheeks as I cry,  
hearing Grandma's last psalm twisted in moans,  
the earth itself humming our lullaby.

Though Grandma's voice is cold in the night  
her silence is filled by her daughter's warm tones.  
Spring grass is sweeter when in Mama's arms I lie:  
the earth itself humming our lullaby.

-McCharen Pratt



*Rose* Kristy Carrell

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*The Energy of a Girl, Amsterdam* Tim Pitts



## wom'•an•ly • words

Womanly words—wanting words  
we try on playing dress-up  
in mommy's closet. See also *dress down*,  
when mommy finds us in her

powder [*pulvis*: to pulverize]  
and mascara [*maschera*, Italian: *mask*;  
*maskerah*, Arabic: *fool*].

discovering the [*kosmos*: Greek]  
of cosmetics, the “natural” order of  
ourselves, with

*Marie-Claire* and *Mademoiselle* to tell us  
what to be, and how—  
*Glamour* to teach us [from *grammar*:]  
its “magical knowledge,”  
its [*praetig*: *oh so pretty*] tricks....

What can we be? Who will we play?  
Dresses [: *lead straight*] from  
sweet sixteen and homecoming queen  
all the way up to Hell's belles,

the debutantes [*de-but*: a target—  
a doe, a dear, a female deer],  
tiara'd and tussie-mussied to heart's content—

where we can play Cinderella games:  
the countess [*court companion*;  
see also courtesan: *cohort*];  
the duchess [*to lead*, but see “duke” first];  
the princess [see “prince” *primero*];  
the queen who takes all,  
lording it over the many dinky pawns  
and side-saddling knights;  
the empress always [*imperare*:] prepared to command;

Or stranger ventures:

the poetess white-gowned safe and unsound in her attic;  
the murderess with forty whacks;  
a heroine—*not* heroin. You're thinking of bane,  
bella donna, femmes fatales with suspect potables,  
the bad girl with the Veronica Lake bang—

“the thinking man’s *crumpet*,” that Brit mag called the new starlet:

1. found on tea trays with madeleines and ladyfingers;
2. *crumpen*: curled-up cake; from *crumb*, crooked;
3. the real English *muffin* [see also]—

Usage: “What’s the matter, Muffin?” *Muffe*: cake.

Related to cookie, sweetie, sugar [pie], honey [bun]. See also *cupcake*:

[from the Latin *cupere*, to desire]

in the Easy-Bake Oven. What could feel more

womanly? [: from Olde English *wife-man*,

not unlike *femme en français*,

the *mujer española*,

form and function inseparate: WOMAN, GO MAKE ME A SANDWICH!]

Also related to *hausfrau*. Frequent usage during

nervous breakdowns:

*I’m not just a goddamn hausfrau!*

See also *housewife*:

1. a married woman in charge of a household;
2. a pocket case of sewing accoutrements;  
synonym *chutelaine*:

from *castellan*, and thence *castle* [see “a man’s home is”].

Related to *chattel* [from *capitale*, see also *cattle*].

Sometime synonym: Hostess [see *cupcake*].

Anno Domina: In the Year of Our Lady of the House:

madam, madonna, *madame*;

damsel [in distress: see *madam*];

dame, doyenne and dominatrix,

vixen and virgin,

blushing bride and merry widow,

a spinster on the distaff side:

Maiden, *mädchen*. [*mægden*]:  
Get all of thee to a nunnery

with your fallen sisters:

prostitute: *to step forward*

[see also "put your best foot"]:

strumpet: crumpet after one date too many;

chippy: from *chipping sparrow*. See bird.

biddy, duck[y], chick[adee], goose;

songbird, canary, the caged bird;

bunny, filly, bitch, fox; wolf-whistle at

lamb's clothing; my pet:

kitten, catty, pussy[cat] (what's new?), et.al.:

Here a girl, there a girl,  
everywhere a girly-girl.

Why are we kittens tangled in the knitting and you  
tomcats prowling the fence?

Why is the hen never cock of the walk?

Why do words bind us like corsets

[diminutive of *corps*.

diminisher of body]

and play games that can never be won,

the *-ennes* and *-esses* like the jesses  
of hawks, the embroidery to hold us?

-Lauren Terry



*Porch* Rumsey Taylor





## Ice Cream Psalm

I heard a familiar jingle  
Like the songs pigeons sing  
In my dreams.  
I smiled,  
And prayed:

Shepherd,  
When I travail  
The valley of the shadow of death,  
Adorn me in  
A baby-blue tissue  
Paper hat,  
Black-buttoned shirt,  
And bow tie;  
Make my chariot  
And old van-truck hybrid  
The color of sky;  
Gird it with pixie-hued  
Placards shouting  
Of sugar, and let  
Hamlisch's "The Entertainer" trumpet  
From its brow;

I will scream  
    "Ice Cream Sandwiches!  
    Creamsicles! Fudgesicles!  
    Dove Bars and Rocket-Pops and glorious Push-Ups!"  
Like a holy banshee,  
And I will fear no evil.

-Jerry Hinnen

## Urbana

Crisp air rests low in brick and asphalt.  
And aluminum tables join  
Chairs of painted wire mesh  
Rusting in the downtown square.  
Dim orange streets  
Hold midnight stars out of eyes' reach.  
And scrapers tower  
Over hints of moonlight.  
Dirty yellow blanket is refuge on the corner  
For the bundled man bumming change.  
And a lamppost holds shadow  
As girded girl awaits response to skin-tight red  
And knee-high black leather.  
Gutters trickle stagnant  
In broken glass and newspaper sludge.  
And steam creeps to find its way above ground.  
Center-street.  
A vapor in the headlights of passers-by.

-Justin Jarvis



*From the prison of her flesh* Brook Darnell

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## Sax Player

Evening falls ripe and sweet  
As is the moon tonight.

And my shadow races me  
To the neon flash

Through foggy streets  
And hazy lantern light.  
To the club that wears my name.

On this night,  
High spirits heavy with talk  
Grow strong behind the door.

Smoky sweat fills this  
Cardboard box of a bar.

Hefty Joes and pretty Jane Does  
Drown days in liquor stained glass,  
As I take the stage, opening my case.

I bring forth  
My snake charm  
Brass.

I fit the reed.  
I grip the piece

With my lips.  
Force feed the air  
With my motion in E.

Tones in the belly  
Bust forth.

And I am moving.  
In slow motion,

Brothers and strangers  
To places past  
To tears once wept.

I am bleeding  
The soul with my runs.

I am indigo melodies  
Bellowing old love

Note by note  
Tone by tone  
In the lime light.

-Justin Jarvis





*Shrouded Green Chair*

Jessica Callow

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## Excerpt from “Bobby Wallace Goes to Hell”

by Will Oakley

One night, little Bobby Wallace dreamt that he had died. When he awoke, he didn't recognize where he was. It wasn't his bedroom, of that he was sure. The walls were bare, no signs of the posters of superheroes and spaceships that covered his walls. There was no blue carpet, no window either, and the door was on the wrong wall. He walked over to the door and tried the knob. It felt strangely warm against his palm, like the side of a mug of cocoa. He twisted it, but the door didn't budge. It was locked.

Bobby leaned down and peered through the crack between the door and floor, but all he could see was strange red light. Maybe I've been abducted by aliens, he thought hopefully. Bobby had always wanted to be abducted by aliens. Anybody who gets abducted by aliens always gets a better life, a life of excitement and adventure, like Captain Neutron. Bobby's neighbor, Garrett Cunningham told him that if he were old enough to watch the *X-Files* like him, he wouldn't want to be abducted by aliens. Garrett said that aliens do disgusting things to people and tried to scare Bobby, but Bobby didn't worry. He figured that either way, he probably wouldn't have to go to school any more.

Besides, everybody knew Garrett was a big liar. He had told everybody that his dad was a secret agent, that's why he was never at their house, but Bobby's friend John said his mom told him that Garrett's parents were divorced and that his dad lived in Texas. After that nobody in the neighborhood paid too much attention to what Garrett said, even though he was in the fifth grade.

At that moment, Bobby heard muffled voices outside the door. He stepped back in time to dodge the door as it flung open. Bobby looked at the two figures standing in the doorway and he couldn't stop himself from whispering, “Wow.”

The creatures stepped into the room, staring at him with glowing yellow eyes. Their skin was red and leathery and they had big bat wings on their back and two horns coming out of their heads. They made weird clapping noises when they took steps because they had furry legs and hooves like the horse he had seen on the field trip his first grade class had taken last March. Bobby took a deep breath and shouted, “Take me to your leader!”

“Relax, that's where we're going. His Dark Majesty always wants to talk to the new recruits when they arrive,” said one of the creatures in a gravelly voice. He sounded like Mr. Hightower, who lived at the top of the hill on Bobby's street. Mr. Hightower's voice always sounded like he had a sore throat. Bobby's mom said that Mr. Hightower sounded like that because he smoked, so he should never start smoking like Mr. Hightower.

“He's a little one, isn't he?” said the other creature. His voice was rough like the other one's, but higher. “I mean,” the creature continued, “we don't usually get them this young, do we?”

“No,” said the first, “he must have been a very busy little boy back there to have earned a place here. Usually the ones that die young simply haven't had enough time to make a reputation for themselves.”

“Hey you,” Bobby interrupted, “I'm not dead!”

“Of course you are,” the creature said with irritation, “How else could you be in Hell?”

“Heck”

“What?”

“My mom says that people shouldn't say ‘H-E-Double Hockey Sticks.’ They should say ‘heck’ instead.”

“Isn't that adorable,” said the second creature, smiling until he noticed that the first creature was glaring at him.

“Idiot, don't you see what he's trying to do?” snapped the first creature. “He's trying to trick us into thinking he's harmless so we underestimate him.” The creature bent down so he was eye to eye with Bobby, wagging a pointy-nailed finger in his face. “Listen here you, in case you haven't noticed, we're fallen angels, the supreme henchpersons to the Prince of Darkness. You can't trick us, because we created all the scams and manipulations that exist. Ned here,” he said pointing to the second creature, “created that whole ‘something on your shirt’ routine.”

“What's that?” Bobby asked.

“Ned, show him.”

“Okay, Steve,” said the second creature. He walked over to Bobby, pointed at his shirt, and said, “You've got something on your shirt.” Bobby looked down at his Captain Neutron pajamas only to have the creature thwack him on the nose with his finger. Both of the creatures roared with laughter. After a minute or so, they finally pulled themselves together. The one called Steve let out a big sigh and said, “Ah, now *that's* evil.”

Bobby looked down at his pajamas again. There was nothing on them. Ned had lied. Bobby looked at Ned, his eyes narrowing with fury. "You lied Ned. You're a liar."

Ned opened his mouth in shock and mumbled, "It was only meant in fun. You don't have to be so huffy."

"Yeah," Steve said, "if you keep up that kind of attitude you're not going to make it very far here."

"Or have many friends," finished Ned, concluding the statement by sticking his forked tongue out at Bobby.

Steve grabbed Bobby by the shoulder. "Come on, you're going to make us late and His Dark Majesty isn't known for his patience." Ned grabbed Bobby by the other shoulder and they led him outside into a dark tunnel. It was even hotter than the room and the air was sticky with moisture. Bobby thought he heard someone screaming behind him. He tried to turn around and see if someone needed help, but all he could make out in that direction was darkness.

As they continued they met a man dressed in a funny white robe with leaves on his ears.

"Hello, I'm Virgil. I'm here to . . ."

"Hey!" shouted Steve. "What do you think you're doing outside the First Circle? This place is off limits to you heathens. Beat it!"

Bobby turned and watched the man skitter away. "Keep up!" snapped Steve, yanking Bobby.

"Ow," Bobby squealed. Steve's claws were digging into his shoulders. "You didn't say 'please.'"

"This whole innocent act is getting old, kid. How about you give it a rest?"

"I don't know, Steve, maybe the little guy has a point," said Ned.

"I can't believe I'm hearing this. How long have we known each other Ned?"

"Since time began," Ned conceded.

"And you're going to take his side? This little twerp you've only known for a couple of minutes? After I took that shot from that seraph's flaming sword that was aimed at you during the war?"

"I'm not taking any sides. I'm just saying that at times you can be a bit abrasive."

"Of course I'm abrasive! I'm a demon, it's my job to be abrasive."

While Ned and Steve argued, they dragged Bobby closer and closer toward the source of the strange red light he had noticed beneath the door of the room he had awoken in. Bobby's mind drifted back to his collection of past issues of Captain Neutron. In his head he started to flip through the pages of issue after issue, looking for devices that the Cap' had encountered on his intergalactic space voyages which might produce a similar effect to the one he saw in front of him. Hyperspace flux inducer? Nope, those produced white light. Artificial Gravity Generator? No, they weren't that bright. Then it came to Bobby, and he wondered why he hadn't thought of it earlier. All the clues were there. Red light, uncomfortable warm temperatures. It was obvious: Heat Ray. The creatures had built a heat ray just like the Lava People of Alpha Centauri, he thought. But then a scary thought crept into his mind. There was no Captain Neutron here to foil these creatures' nefarious plans. It was up to him to save the world. Garrett Cunningham will probably be real jealous, he thought.



*Legion Allison Sandlin*





*Nadir* John Baxter

Quad 2000

## The Sublime Dilemma

After his head was described by Imogene Lolly  
as spit-shined  
and punch-drunk (maintenance-free and boisterous, he called it),  
He began offering the world alternatives...

Wigs repulsed him—  
and he was a man of spontaneity and spark  
and apparently balls of cotton,  
because fellow members of his cult  
(dedicated to the Study of Subconscious Relationships)  
witnessed this glorious fellow  
march right into the weekly gathering last Friday  
brown-dyed-cotton-headed,  
and a small moustache added using one of the balls  
(he took it off halfway through the meeting after it kept ending up in his mouth).

And about his drinking...  
When he began attending Alcoholics Anonymous—  
He called himself Daddy Warbucks—  
He had switched from cotton to ordinary lawn grass,  
and some fellow group members figured this guy should probably hit the bottle  
every *now* and then...  
The grass had a few wild, dry cattails in it that one lady—  
Imogene—  
was allergic to.  
(Ms. Imogene Lolly didn't drink—  
she thought that AA  
would be a good way for them to bump  
into each other,  
since he never went to the tenant meetings in their building).  
Her allergy was a fateful shame,  
not only for all her wheezing and bawling,  
but she was a lady who was secretly in love with Shalimar Stringfellow,  
and liked him the way he used to be (the *old* Shalimar).

She *did* fancy a bowl  
and took her own pure yellow shoes  
and her pure yellow ball to the lanes.  
Where she played alone—  
But not without thought and sadness—  
And pictured the pins  
as various people and places  
that she either loved or hated...



Imogene was a lean woman,  
And Shalimar had once dreamed of her with  
golf-tee limbs and a nine-iron body,  
But still of striking beauty  
and an aura of introversion and curiosity  
That would make Shalimar Stringfellow  
lose his hair and  
drink anyone under the nearest table.  
He hoped she would never know of these dreams,  
But wondered about hers.

Imogene dreamed  
that when they were in love,  
she would be his weevil,  
his striking linkswoman,  
and she would kiss his head  
smack on the mole above his left ear  
as they fell asleep together.  
And she knew that waking up to that head  
would always make her smile.  
Imogene was certain that Shalimar would understand  
why she imagined love so close to hate,  
And she knew if Shalimar learned of her dreams  
He would love her forever.

-Russ Parrish

## Karaoke Bars

I knew there was some ho's in this house

and that they'd soon be after me screaming,  
"Just shake that ass, bitch, and let me see  
whatcha got!"

I was scared, to say the least, and running  
soon became my second nature,  
like an impala or cheetah.

I knew that when the ho's did catch up  
that they would use me in Kyoto like  
I'd been used before, dancing on table tops  
for drunk Japanese businessmen,  
satisfying their ugly needs.

It was hell on earth for me  
and I knew that I couldn't continue  
as I had been.

My hair was dirty from the fish juice  
that had been smothered in it by the  
businessmen and my clothes  
reeked of smoke and sake.

I was degraded and  
it wasn't fun.

But when is being degraded fun, huh?  
I mean, sure, I've been kicked around  
by drunk Japanese businessmen before  
but that don't mean I like it.

It just means I'm a karaoke slave and  
it will not end.

They beat me mercilessly and I cried  
like a flood.

The crying isn't the hardest part,  
it's the waiting.

Waiting to be smacked upside the head  
with a bottle by a drunk man with  
thick glasses on.

They don't care for me; they just make me  
sing and "shake my ass" while they watch  
and fake-throw bottles like a master does  
to his dog with a rubber ball.

They make you wear kimonos  
with sexual scenes on them while a  
geisha smile has to stay on your face,  
lest they really throw the bottles.

Because that's about the only time  
they throw the bottles,

when you don't smile.

The smile makes you hurt inside  
but the Japanese business men say  
they love you and that the pain will be  
temporary and the smile will last forever.

-J. Pryer



*Searching for a Beat to March to*      Wes Frazer

Quad 2000



*Hot or Cold?* Mary Catherine Anthony

## Keeping Secrets

Most secrets are little fires.  
Every time I hold my tongue,  
The coals are stirred anew  
Flesh and flame exist together  
Each day that I have to lie for you,  
the First is fed  
Its primal hunger grown.  
An incessant pyre.  
Until I can no longer stand  
To keep it near me,  
So I release it  
Before I am consumed.

Other secrets are water.  
Drops of rain that come in  
Through my head, and collect  
In pools in my shoes.  
The more that you give me,  
The more you fill me with water.  
Sea-legs, wobbly,  
Water-heavy head, bowed.  
Until the clear rivers  
Flow to their salty sea,  
Exposing the cracked earth  
That lies beneath them.

-David Carter

## July and everything the Counting Crows left off

the twisted metal of the Jimmy,  
the pictures of the scene,  
the black eye and aching body,  
I know it was painful for her to see  
and watch her father in agony,  
but sometimes we forget to thank God  
for letting us live another day.

-Darren Griffin



# Heirloom

Your legs—glacial, purple, and stone.  
Screaming about the hair caught in your brush.  
You did not know my name.  
And you called the lump of dirt outside your window Ruth's Beach.

Through your set of 50 Great Episodes, you made Johnny Carson God.  
But you no longer made homemade lumpy mashed potatoes.  
I now know how to run an IV.  
Yet never could make your slippers warm enough.

Resting now, in your miniature room  
-A home within a Home.  
Your TV cannot pick up your Larry King Live.

You handed down your yellowed newspaper clippings and inspirational phrases.  
And taught me ninety-nine uses for stockings, but I can't use any of them.

You always had apples and Japanese beer.

You froze everything to save for later—even garbage.  
Taking out your teeth every night—  
I always found them under your bed, or in your shoe or behind the washing machine that could jump rope.

You went to every graduation and every wedding but mine.  
We used to watch the D.C. fireworks from your backyard drinking grape Kool-Aid and eating Smacks.

Because of you, I learned to be a masseuse  
—To rub gently, perfumed by Ben-Gay.

You told stories about orchards and outhouses  
And married a purple hearted drunk from Pittsburgh  
Whom I never knew.

Hair bluing each week a few shades slight of sapphire.  
Doris the hairdresser gave you a perm every Saturday.  
Waiting, I read her tabloid bibles.

You would take two hours in the Kroger  
Touching every piece of fruit and flirting with the bag boys.  
Wooing them with a wink and a smile.

You taught me to waltz, but no one's ever asked.  
And the day you told me I became a woman,  
I had to wear your depends.

You knew how to hula, but never taught me.  
And you used to stand in the backyard feeding the birds-nameless to everyone but you.

You gave me all your jewelry  
And your quilt now rest on my bed.

You died alone.  
And I have your hands.

-Beth Spencer



*Woman In Pearls*     Amber Friend

## Maryanne's Masterpiece

Tuesday. She is at  
it again,  
clipping pictures of the President  
out of *Time*  
and tabloids.

Cutting around the contour of his body so as not to  
snip away a finger or an elbow or  
a stray gray hair.

Noon. Bedspread  
covered with dozens of  
little presidential bodies and  
heads, with a few VP's and  
First Ladies here  
and there for good measure.  
Magazines become  
mutilated skeletons;  
she watches as they fall  
to the carpet,  
brushes off clinging paper  
slivers and trades  
the big orange-handled scissors  
for transparent tape,  
sticky on both sides.

Trudges downstairs  
wearing rayon housecoat  
and Monday's mascara.  
Painstakingly  
arranges the figures on the  
refrigerator exterior;  
she has a method  
though this expression,  
this art  
may appear  
only haphazard  
through outsider eyes.

Finished she steps backwards  
across warped linoleum,  
to admire the tribute,  
a domestic shrine,  
and stops to feel  
her kitchen fill  
with an odd mixture  
of authority and controversy:  
power and scandal.

She laughs  
at the way  
she has made  
big people  
small.

-Liz Godwin

## Twilight

Under the covers I cannot feel  
The air conditioner blowing its cool breeze.  
"You didn't used to sleep naked,"  
He said. But he doesn't seem to mind.  
"I know....it just feels more comfortable."  
Comfort. Something I knew only in him.  
The air conditioner continued to play  
Its gentle, breezy music that sang my body to sleep.  
The blankets are my night-armor,  
Protective sheets of flannel that caress  
My undraped skin.  
Under the covers, he touches my leg  
And all of my blood and emotion rises  
To the surface, prickling under my flesh.  
In the twilight, we are uncovered,  
Creatures of the night, together in each other's arms.  
We are young and free in the shadows, company  
To the beating hearts we bare. We are separate and  
In love and falling fast asleep. Our legs are tangled  
In the night's glow. Our souls are welded to  
The day's end. In the twilight, we are whole.

-Niven McCrary





*Frillica* Nicole Miller

Quad 2000



*It Never Changes*     Chris Screws



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